

The Senate created Bobby Baker, and now this unwieldy body of men must share responsibility for what he did.

## Bobby was the boy to see

BY BEN H. BAGDikian AND DON OSERDORFER



Many banks along with building societies have some sort of basic mortgage facility to support people that really cannot get

I put the funds into a white envelope. You should have seen my car, my house. At first it was \$250 a month, then one hundred and a fifty. I'd look the Rap, put the envelope in my pocket, drive up to the Capitol and go into his office. We'd be alone, just him and me. I'd take the envelope, say if it's real, put out the money and count it. Once, when the price went up to \$500 a month, we didn't have a chance to go to the bank, we had to run money from company receipts to the office. So I took this great big wad of bills into his office in the Capitol, and he counted it all out. I was so nervous, I couldn't even talk. He laid out on his desk. He always counted it, real tight and there."

The winner is Ralph Hill, an aggressive, 35-year-old Washington businessman from a small town in South Carolina. "Hill" is Bobby Grant Baker, an older aggressive, 55-year-old Washington businessman from another small town in South Carolina. Hill made his announcement in a paid insert last September 5. Until he made those charges—which Baker has categorically denied—Bobby was also secretary for the Democratic majority of the United States House. He was known—to those who knew him at all—as the quiet, efficient "perfect servant" of the Senate.

When a long, electric signal ran through the marble mazes of the Capitol, bringing senators rushing to the chamber for a vote, Bobby Baker was always at the rear of the august hall, a slightly stooped young man, almost six feet tall, dressed in an impenetrable dark suit with a vest and a white shirt tie. As each Democratic senator hustled through the voting stage, he would whisper briefly with Baker. Page boys would run to him with scribbled telephone messages, and Baker, still talking, would scan the messages and stuff them into pockets already full of notes. He would select down the aisle

and talk briefly with one student, barely ever in response to a hint of the head-tilt another. He snapped his fingers, and a pair-boy sitting to his side. A few words and the page would evaporate as soon as it was read.

Quietly, efficiently, fearlessly, nobly organized the vote, displacing the majority of what seemed modestly odd themselves in "the greatest deliberative body in the world." He was informing each senator what the vote was for, when the leadership would rise and what the final count was likely to be. At any given moment he knew where every senator was and what he was doing. He would tell them when they should be present and when they could leave, when it was wise to speak and when to keep quiet. And he was seldom wrong.

Babity was a gracious improviser, moving like a polite sphinx among so many busy anchors. He regularly informed one anchor when he could safely take a cue off for his daily visit to the Senate Gymnasium. During the round-the-clock Smithsonian Birthday of 1998, he told elderly Democratic liberals when they could go home to sleep—and then dispatched polite cruisers to pick them up when they didn't need to be the fiercest. Once Babity closed his 18th Anniversary of Oklahoma by telephone for three days, while the senator was flying through Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, trying to maintain his back for an unimpaired fiery-bell nose important to Minnesota's future.

No law or regulation describes Bobbi's job, but he was the most effective helper the Senate ever had. He knew on almost every issue which way the Senate would go and how each senator would vote and why he would vote that way. The Senate Guard was almost infallible.

Then Ralph Hill used Bobby and some of his friends. He charged that the Soviet agents' money had used his influence to get Hill's vending machines into a defense plant and then, after taking each payoff, conspired to avoid the vending contract. Bobby denied all of Hill's charges. Nevertheless, all kinds of rumors began to spread through Washington. Stories of orange groves appeared in the press. The FBI entered the case.

At first the Benay remained officially unconcerned. Bobby's boss, Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, said his aide's outside business was no affair of the Senate, but one senator disgruntled Doggie John Williams of Delaware stirred from his chair in the chamber and pursued his own quiet investigation down-town. Bobby avoided him as long as possible and feebly resigned rather than face his questions.

As the scandal grew, some people began talking of it as an American "Pro-

himself," but Buddy Baker's world included a number of party girls who were not interested solely in politics. The most spectacular was Ellen Rosenbach, a beauty model married to a sergeant in the German embassy. After an FBI investigation both the Rosenbachs were mysteriously whisked back to Germany.

Reporters looking into rumors of a disappearance involved the Queens Club, a disreputable late-night establishment where Betty had helped organize as a Capital Hill meeting place for lawmakers and lobbyists. They trooped to the Casanova, a millionaire-diner luxury hotel in Queens City, Md., that Betty had built as a "highly elite" halfway for the rich-and-conned set. In addition, they discovered that Betty, his wife and the children were living in a new \$124,580 mansion, complete with a Chinese herself to answer the door.

By the time the 21-year-old administrator occurred by his 21-year-old administrative assistant, a former beauty queen named Carrie York.

And along with that high life, superiors uncovered the first traces of an insurance financial empire. Mobley turned out to be an insider on a spectacular stock deal of the Mortgage Guaranty Insurance Corporation. He had done ties to Sun-1 Corporation, which had a \$1.5 million vending business in delinquent plants. Newsom reported his insurance in a private law practice, an insurance firm, a travel agency, real estate—seven companies.

Bobby Baker's official salary was \$19,600 yearly. By his own estimate his assets were over \$1.5 million. The Senate decided it had better investigate.

The legislators' initial reluctance was understandable. Bobby knows and the senators know that whatever he did has also been done by some of the men he served. Senators for years have laid down rigid rules for others in government, but they have refused to apply similar rules to themselves. To a remarkable degree, the senators would be stinging in judgment on the failure Bobby Baker had survived these things.

Boddy, more than any other known being, was the child of the United States Senate. He was delivered unto that body while he was still in knee pants. From the start of his rise at the age of 34 to the moment of his fall at age 39, he was never off the Senate council.

In 1962 a senator from South Carolina, on the recommendation of friends, chose young Bobby to be a Senate page. Bob Gold and his mother, his arrival by bus from his hometown of Pickens, S. C., with \$600 in his wallet. When he showed up for work at the Capitol, the older boys took him into the glossy caverns of the cellar and stripped off his brand-new page-boy knickerbockers to administer the usual brandwhisking. Back to their di-

light, the country kid was wearing old-fashioned long wooden underwear. They whopped him extra hard, until he could rest at home; they squirmed him with Seltzer water and induced him to blurt secrets. That night in his lonely room he wrote in his diary, "I'm so homesick." For 12 nights he made the identical entry. Back home, Miss Lucille Hallum, one of his schoolteachers, heard of his sorrow and wrote and told him to persevere. She got back a note penciled on lined paper: "Miss Hallum, Bobby Baker don't quit."

Bobby did not quit; instead, he made the Senate his home. In the years that followed, Bobby experienced the major episodes of a young man's life under the great dome of the Capitol building itself. There he grew into long pants, had his first shave, went to high school, received his diploma, studied his college and law-school lessons, launched his first business venture, and his wife and children took their wedding reception in 1945 over his desk. Bobby was the only one of the 100 senators of a man central to his life. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, Bobby has two sons and twelve nieces and nephews, all of whom are in the company of his company. Bobby has five United States senators.

he was friendly, energetic, quick to learn. At the age of 16 he was that Democratic page boy. At 19 he supported his superiors that the patronage committee created a job for him, one of chief of the Democratic clubhouse. His work in this Senate business chamber brought him in close contact with every senator. He learned quickly to find his way to the Senate's dining room, particularly a restaurant named L'Espresso Italiano. When the job of Senate clerk came open, Ruffley, Ingersoll, and Johnson's movements by writing new letters that Lyndon already had

In 1951, when Bobby was 24 years old, Johnson helped him become assistant to the secretary of the Democratic minority. Two years after that the Democratic regained control of the Senate, Johnson became majority leader and Bobby Baker was elected secretary for the majority. The Constitution says a man may not become a senator until he is 30 years old, at the age of 26 Bobby was advising senators what to do.

The country boy showed an early sensitivity to status. In 1947 Bobby borrowed \$400 from a fellow Senate employee to start his first business venture. He bought a new car, repainted it, in a taxicab and became one of Washington's many part-time cab-drivers. Shortly after that he began courting pretty Dorothy Connolly, who was secretary to one of his bosses, Senate Democratic whip Scott Lugen. He finally went out of the hack business.

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*As much as any man, the genial, efficient Bobby Baker ran the Senate machinery; until scandal broke, most senators considered him indispensable.*

painting his car back to respectable passenger colors. A little later he had plastic surgery to reduce the prominence of his nose which, apparently, he regarded as unsuitable for a man of growing authority. Then he took yet another step. Bobby Gene Baker was named by his father after the golfer Bobby Jones and the prizefighter Gene Tunney. But now he began to list himself in official directories as "Robert G. Baker." His birth certificate in Pickens County Courthouse bears the original typewritten name, "Bobby Gene Baker." At a date unknown, the name "Robert" was added in ink.

Bobby, as he continued to be known throughout political Washington, was at the threshold of important power. But before one can understand the significance of this power, it is necessary to understand something about the personal problems of a United States senator. He

has three urgent pressures: the need for help in voting, the desire for some relief from the demands of the work, and the necessity for money to run for reelection.

A senator must vote on more measures each year than any single human being can possibly understand. Last year the Senate acted on 1,212 bills, some of which had as many as 50 amendments. An elaborate system of committees keeps track of this flood of measures, but when the senator reaches the chamber for a vote, he must find out quickly and accurately what each bill is about and how it affects him. He needs to know when he can safely miss part of the endless debate, when he can prudently return to his state for political fence-mending or escape for dinner with his family. All the while his thoughts drift ahead to the next election, in which virtue may have its place but there is no substitute for campaign funds.

Fate could not have designed a better answer to these problems than Bobby Gene Baker. This impressed many of his bosses even before they reached the Senate. In his additional duty as part-time secretary of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee—the financial and electioneering arm of Senate Democrats—Bobby was often on the road bearing advice and money. For many a new candidate he was like a benevolent angel, their first harbinger of the Promised Land.

The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, which Bobby served from 1956 to 1961, gets its funds from patriotic citizens, from the party faithful and from special interests with axes to grind. Despite campaign finance laws, there is a lot more political spending than anyone reports. Even so, the committee reported receipts of \$952,000 during Bobby's five-year tenure. The committee of senators,

headed by George Smathers of Florida, decided how the funds would be dispensed. And while Bobby did not determine who got what, he kept financial records in his office, only a few feet from the Senate chamber. This gave him inside knowledge of extraordinary value in politics; who gave money and who got it.

In 1961 a new set of Democratic leaders decided it was imprudent to make law and collect cash in the same place. They moved the countinghouse downtown. The inconvenience of the new location ended Bobby's campaign-committee role but it did not end his access to political funds. Last January on the Senate floor he approached a newly elected senator, Tom McIntyre of New Hampshire, and said "some people" he knew would be willing to pick up McIntyre's unpaid campaign bills of more than \$10,000. McIntyre declined the offer.

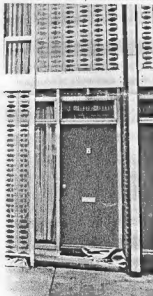


Bobby, his wife and five children recently moved into this \$124,500 suburban mansion.



In happier days, Bobby and mink-clad wife, Dorothy, celebrate at friend's wedding.

Baker's administrative assistant, Carole Tyler (right), lived in \$28,000 town house which Baker owns; uncollected newspapers in doorway indicates she was not at home.



## Congress: A Personal Failure

### On a salary of \$19,600 he admitted

Once elected, virtually the first act of a senator-to-be was to pay a call on Bobby Baker. He was the perfect adviser on where to find a place to live, which of the senatorial elders to cultivate and which committee assignments to try for. A farm-state senator went to Bobby with the intention of getting on the Agriculture Committee. "Don't do it," Bobby told him. "The far people are from safe states. You can't solve the farm problem, and you'll only get hurt at home." This was shrewd advice; the senator was grateful.

For the committees of the Senate, Bobby was like a marriage broker. He knew who was unhappy with what he had, who coveted another's position, who was bored, who was happy. When committee assignments were shuffled, he could play many moves ahead like a computer or master chess player.

Until the very end almost all the senators were fond of Bobby. But a great many of their assistants were not. One reason is that Bobby began to deal directly with senators, bypassing their aides. "Any time I called Bobby I got him," one senator said. "But my administrative assistant could never reach him unless I was out of town. How would Bobby know I was out of town? I guess I would have called him to see if I could go in the first place."

Anyone studying the evolution of Bobby Baker would find three major influences: Sen. George A. Smathers, the late Sen. Robert S. Kerr; and Vice President Johnson. The fast-climbing Smathers taught Bobby how to dress; the rich and powerful Kerr taught him how to succeed in business; Johnson taught him persuasion, politics and power. The most important, by far, was Johnson.

Bobby's soft South Carolina drawl hardened into an exact copy of Johnson's parched Texas twang, until on the telephone it was almost impossible to distinguish between them. Johnson has no sons, and some people began to call Bobby "Little Lyndon."

Lyndon Johnson not only helped shape Baker; he also transformed the institution they both served. Johnson's skill at fence-mending, logrolling and coalition-building changed the Senate from a loose collection of independent barons to something approaching an organization. No one was more deft at knowing when to grant a favor and when to demand one in return. On a close vote Lyndon Johnson could make favorable senators crystallize out of thin air and cause opponents to dissolve, unheard and uncounted, into the cloakroom. He was a sorcerer and Bobby Baker was his apprentice.

Sometime between January 3, 1955, when Bobby became secretary for the majority, and September 9, 1963, when the Hill lawsuit started him tumbling down, his friends noticed that something was happening to Bobby Baker. Some of his oldest companions think, at least in retrospect, that this change began at the exact moment when it dawned upon Lyndon Johnson that he might become President of the United States.

In the busy-busy of a national campaign, the former page boy was meeting such people as the Murchisons of Texas; he later took one member of that oil-rich

family to see Gov. Pat Brown of California about a racetrack franchise. Bobby became a close friend of Fred Black Jr., a Washington representative of a large defense contractor, who is now under indictment for income-tax evasion. He came to know big-time gamblers from Las Vegas, some of whom he accompanied to New York headquarters of Pan American World Airways in their pursuit of casino privileges at a Caribbean resort.

But Johnson's campaign collapsed, and he was raised to the lofty irrelevance of the Vice Presidency. He left behind an apprentice who knew the techniques but now served a quite different majority leader. Sen. Mike Mansfield, unlike Johnson, believed senators should make up their own minds. Johnson used to superintend Bobby's every move. Until the scandal broke, the quiet, professorial Mansfield did not even know that for eight years Bobby had been available to private clients through his personal law practice downtown.

The fact that there was a "new" Bobby Baker became more evident.

"I was dictating to my secretary in an anteroom just thirty feet from Bobby when they called a vote Bobby knew I was interested in," a senator said of an incident this year. "Bobby seemed to have his mind on something else, and he never notified me. I missed the vote and I blew up at him. 'That never happened before,' I told him. 'I'm not going to depend on you anymore.'"

"I had a definite date to meet Bobby at his office at ten o'clock, and he didn't show up until eleven-thirty," a Senate aide said. "It was so unusual, we talked about it at the time."

Still another recalled that Bobby used to slap him on the back in good-natured camaraderie. "But in the last year or two when I passed him in the cloakroom, he didn't even nod."

Something also seemed to be happening on the Senate floor. There were some important votes which the leadership thought it was going to win but which it lost by one or two votes. In last year's battle over medical care for the aged, Sen. Clinton Anderson of New Mexico, chief Administration strategist for the bill, issued a strange warning against the men paid to help his party: "Don't tell Bobby anything. Anderson was suspicious of Bobby's personal allegiance to Senator Kerr, then the leader of the opposition to Medicare. Medicare was brought to a vote after Bobby informed the White House that Kerr would lose by one or two votes. The result stunned Congress: Kerr won by two votes. Some Democrats thought they had been betrayed.

Whatever happened, a part of Bobby's mind was clearly on other things. Stocks, for example. Mortgage Guaranty Insurance Corporation, a Milwaukee company which insures home loans, had been trying for some time to get a favorable tax ruling from the Government. Two weeks before the Government handed down the ruling, Bobby acquired some of the stock. Immediately after the ruling, the stock began to rise. Some time later he wrote an intriguing letter, which he dictated to Carole Tyler. It was typed on his official Senate stationery. "Dear Al,"

## assets of \$1,528,436.

it said. "This letter is to acknowledge receipt of \$27,444.93, which is my one-half of the receipts from the sale of 3,000 shares of Mortgage Guaranty Insurance Corporation stock which you purchased for yourself and myself March 8, 1960. As you know, we received a total of \$66,889.86 from the sale. . . . This stock cost us \$4,905.00 each."

The letter was addressed to Alfred S. Novak, a business partner of Bobby's who was involved not only in stock deals but also in the Maryland motel which was later sold for \$1.2 million.

Novak was found dead in March, 1962, under circumstances which are still a subject of controversy. He was discovered unconscious in his garage, with the car motor running. His subsequent death was ascribed to a heart attack; two months later the death certificate was amended to list suicide as a cause of death.

In 1958 Bobby had amused his colleagues around the Senate with a minor measure allowing the importation of giraffes from Kenya to a private zoo in Florida. The zookeeper was a client of Bobby's law associate, Ernest C. Tucker, and the giraffe legislation was known jokingly as "Bobby's bill." But in November *The New York Times* reported Baker's part in another measure which was no laughing matter. The paper said he "used his influence" to amend the omnibus tax bill of 1962 in a way which could benefit luxury motels such as the one he owned in Maryland.

By this time it was obvious that Bobby Baker had come a long way from Pickens, S.C. In 1956 he told an interviewer he had an outside income of \$15,000 a year, mainly from South Carolina investments. By the summer of 1962 he told the FHA that his assets were \$1,528,436 and his net worth \$826,286.95.

For the first time Bobby began to talk about retiring—perhaps to seek political office on his own in his native South Carolina. But Ralph Hill and his vending-company lawsuit changed everything.

It is typical of the Senate that the official investigation was assigned to placid, likable Everett Jordan of North Carolina, who was the business partner of some of Bobby's partners in a Howard Johnson motel. Jordan first came to the Senate in 1958. His chronological age is 67. But the Senate, like the Christians, Jews, Moslems and Chinese, has its own system of counting time, and the Year One is always the date of a man's entry into its sacred precincts. By this time scale Bobby is an elder. He came in 21 years ago, and only six members of the present Senate were there before him. For the other 94, the kid from Pickens, like the ceramic spittoons and the antique inlaid, was accepted as part of the tradition. And, because he was so much a child of the Senate, when Bobby fell, some of the Senate's prestige fell with him.

At the end of Everett Jordan's first day in the Senate, at dusk of May 6, 1958, a reporter stopped him in a corridor and inquired what great things had transpired in those first auspicious hours.

"Oh, I went over to the Senate chamber," the kindly old man replied, "and I stayed there until Bobby Baker told me I could come home."

THE END



When Johnson was Senate majority leader and Bobby was his secretary, the two men conferred regularly in Senate halls. But would tell senators what leadership wanted, then report back on how each man was going to vote. Some called Bobby "Little Legend."